

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 03944 041039Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEHRAN 3944

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IR, IS, SA, US
SUBJ: IRAN: THE ISRAELI CONNECTION

1. FOLLOWING OUR HABIT OF PERIODICALLY EXCHANGING VIEWS, I MET WITH UNOFFICIAL ISRAELI AMBASSADOR LUBRANI MAY 4. IN THE COURSE OF OUR CONVERSATION HE DESCRIBED IRAN/ISRAELI RELATIONS AS BEING VERY SATISFACTORY AND BACK TO THE STATE THAT EXISTED PRE-1973. HE FELT THIS WAS A RESULT OF A CONSCIOUS POLICY DECISION BY THE SHAH TO RESTORE THE BALANCE BETWEEN IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND WITH THE ARAB WORLD THAT HAD TILTED TOWARD THE LATTER FOLLOWING THE 1973 WAR. ISRAELI NON-MILITARY SALES TO IRAN HAVE NOW RISEN TO \$175 MILLION A YEAR. MILITARY SALES (SMALL ARMS, AMMUNITION, ETC.) ARE ABOUT 15 PERCENT OF IRAN'S BUDGET FOR THESE ITEMS, AND THERE HAS BEEN A FAIRLY LIVELY EXCHANGE OF VISITORS ON BOTH SIDES. ASSUME DEPARTMENT IS FAMILIAR WITH REPORTS ON THIS SUBJECT IN OTHER CHANNELS. LUBRANI WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HOPED US AND IRAN COULD REACH AGREEMENT ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION AND THAT FROM THIS WOULD DEVELOP THE SALE OF US NUCLEAR REACTORS TO IRAN. HIS INTEREST WAS LINKED TO HIS BELIEF THAT ISRAELI DE-SALINIZATION TECHNOLOGY IS COMPATIBLE WITH US NUCLEAR REACTOR TECHNOLOGY AND THUS COULD BE EXPLOITED.

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2. TURNING TO HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL SCENE, LUBRANI SAID THAT HE SENSED THE SHAH WAS UNEASY ABOUT DIRECTION US POLICY TOWARD IRAN MIGHT TAKE. MORE SPECIFICALLY, HE THOUGHT THE SHAH WAS WORRIED ABOUT OUR ARMS SALES POLICY AND WHETHER OUR CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS MIGHT SOMEHOW BECOME INTERTWINED WITH OUR ARMS POLICY TO IRAN'S DISADVANTAGE.

LUBRANI ALSO SAID THAT THE SHAH WAS WORRIED THAT US POLICY MIGHT INCREASINGLY EMPHASIZE TIES WITH SAUDI ARABIA, AGAIN TO IRAN'S DISADVANTAGE. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS AN ARMS TRANSFER CEILING FOR THE AREA, SAUDI ARABIA WITH ITS IMMENSE WEALTH MIGHT GET A LARGER SHARE OF A LIMITED PIE. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SHAH WAS ENORMOUSLY PLEASED OVER THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO GO FORWARD ON AWACS AND PRESUMABLY SOMEWHAT REASSURED BY THIS.

3. TURNING TO SAUDI ARABIA, LUBRANI NOTED THAT HE HAD DEALT WITH MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS ALL OF HIS PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND THAT HE UNDERSTOOD ARABIC PERFECTLY. HE SAID THAT HE LISTENS TO ARABIC RADIO BROADCASTS DAILY AND FROM THIS AND OTHER INDIRECT INFORMATION HE HAS GATHERED THE IMPRESSION THAT NOT ALL IS WELL IN THE HOUSE OF SAUD. HE SAID THAT ISRAEL KNOWS FOR A FACT THAT KHALID IS A TERMINAL CANCER CASE AND THAT IT MAY ONLY BE A MATTER OF A YEAR OR LESS BEFORE HE EXPIRES. IN THE MEANTIME FAHD AND SULTAN DO NOT ALWAYS SEE EYE TO EYE AND SULTAN HAS TAKEN INITIATIVES NOT ALWAYS COORDINATED AT THE TOP. FURTHERMORE, HE SAID, THE SAUDI MILITARY OFFICERS WHO WERE SENT TO SYRIA WERE GIVEN A HEAVY DOSE OF BA'ATH IDEOLOGICAL INDOCTRINATION AND THIS MAY HAVE CAUGHT ON WITH A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF THEM. HE WAS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN, THEREFORE, WHETHER WE MIGHT NOT SEE A COUP IN SAUDI ARABIA ONE OF THESE DAYS THOUGH IT WAS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHETHER IT WOULD BE A ROYAL COUP, A MILITARY COUP, OR SOMETHING ELSE. HE IMPLIED THAT THE SHAH ALSO WORRIED ABOUT THIS AND THAT IT HELPED EXPLAIN WHY THE SHAH WAS SO CONCERNED ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE ARABIAN PENIN-

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SULA AND IN AFRICA. HE SAID THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOVIET EXPLOITATION OF DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS IN THE AREA WERE OBVIOUS. WE HAVE SEEN IN LIBYA AND IRAQ, HE SAID, THAT A SOVIET/ ISLAMIC CONNECTION IS NOT ALL THAT IMPROBABLE.

MIKLOS

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NNN

Message Attributes

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